THE LEDGER.

THURSDAY, DEC. 29, 1887.

In Louisiana.

It was a lowly cottage, yet enrobed
With gold-green vines and roses royal red,
So close the keenest sunbeam hardly probed
Its chambers dim, with many a cobweb spread.

Ancient it seemed, though loved by nature's young—
Her evanescent, ever-nascent things—
Bright birds and brighter butterflies, that flung
Prismatic splendor from their sumptuous wings.

In the quaint court, the opulent orange trees,
With bud and bloom, with fruitage green and gold
Commingling, from the wooing of the breeze
Turning coyly, as rich dames from suitors bold.

Oh! lovely is that land, on which the sky
Leans like a lover: where the golden hours
Leave a delicious music as they fly,
While the night but deepens the perfume of flowers.

And in that land of love, a man might well,
In passing, fancy that some maiden sweet
Must in that lowly cottage surely dwell,
So shyly hidden from the staring street.

But one day from its cool shades came a cry,
Keen as a woman's at her first born's birth;
A piteous, long-drawn wail of agony,
That chilled the passers by, and stilled their mirth.

And so they entered with expectant thrill
For something strange; and on a snow-white bed,
They found a woman lying stark and still—
A poor old negro woman cold and dead.

The large white curtains fluttered in the breeze
Like flapping sails upon the billowy deep,
And a caged bird, on high, sang little glees,
As if to coax its mistress from her sleep.

But, prisoned in her arms, her master's son,
A fair, white child, she held with clasp so strong
That to unloose him it took more than one
Of the stout men among that wondering throng.

Yet still he clung to her, with sobs and tears
Calling her "bonne maman:" and it is said
That stern men wept, who had not wept for years.

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Now, to some hearts the meaning of all this
May only be the pathos of man's wild
Attempt to bridge the infinite abyss
With love as feeble as a little child.

Yet to my soul, a butterfly of dreams
And flowery thoughts with morning radiance rife,
As in this picture, so forever seems
Death—like a fond black nurse embracing Life.

—Henry W. Austin, in The American Magazine.

Story of a Lost Watch.

"For some time," said the doctor to a Philadelphia *Call* reporter, "I have been attending a colored man on Wood street who is confined to his bed by a chronic disorder. There was no money in the case, but a true physician never thinks of that, and I kept pegging away at my man until I got him on the turn. Then he fell back again, and I began to think that his mind was diseased—that is, that he was brooding over something, and that plays the mischief with medicine. You take the case of a beautiful girl who loses her hair from fever. Her recovery is retarded for weeks if you give her a looking-glass.

"Well, I kept quiet and made myself friendly, and one day the secret came out. He waited until he was alone with me, and then he asked me to go to a closet in the room and hunt up a black stocking. I did so and handed it to him, and he took therefrom something that looked like a bundle of rags. Removing the rags disclosed a roll of paper tied with old twine, and inside was a piece of chamois, and inside of that a beautiful gold watch. I had been watching these proceedings with considerable interest, and when I saw the watch I jumped at once to the conclusion that my patient was about to make restitution for a robbery. I was mistaken.

"'You's away off, boss,' said he, with a smile, as he evidently read my thoughts. 'I didn't stole that watch; I found 'um. I picked up that watch 'bout a year ago on the corner of 15th and Market streets, and I want to give 'um back before I die.' The story looked fishy, but it all turned out naturally enough when I questioned him. He found the watch and brought it home and told no one about it for fear of being robbed. He didn't advertise it because he had no money to pay for the advertisement, and he didn't read the papers to see if a reward had been offered simply because neither he nor any of his family could read. So he hid the watch in a closet and did nothing at all.

"I examined the watch and saw that it was a lady's watch and valuable. On the inside of the case was engraved a date and the name 'Sarah Matilda Shreve.' Here was a clew. 'What do you want me to do with this?' I asked. He replied that I was to find the owner and return the watch with or without a reward, and he seemed actually grateful as I carried it away.

"When I returned to my office I got out the directory and wrote a letter to every Shreve in the city, about a half-dozen, detailing the circumstances and asking for Sarah Matilda. The next day I got a letter from a Shreve telling me that the owner of the watch was now the wife of a prominent citizen—never mind his name—and lived at 17th and Pine. That afternoon I called on the lady, told my story, and she identified the watch beyond question and told how she lost it in coming from Broad street station.

"She was gratified at its recovery and surprised when she heard where it had been for a year, and I am happy to say that her gratitude did not stop at words. The next day she called to see my patient and left a liberal present behind her, and she has been a regular caller ever since. The result is that my man is getting well, and it looks now as if his modest future was assured.

How to be a Sailor.

Having decided to be a navigator, if a boy has nothing else, let him at least start with the consent and blessing of his parents and guardians, and then go to work with the determination of becoming nothing less than the captain of a ship.

At the outset, it would be a good idea for a boy to go on one of the United States training-ships, where young Americans are trained to be seamen. He must be between fourteen and eighteen years of age, and he will not be entitled to his discharge until he has gone through the whole course of instruction.

If our would-be seafarer pursues this course, he will find it to his advantage should he start life on a European steamer. Still, he would be possessed of a great deal of knowledge in reference to naval warfare which, in that position, would be of no use to him, and there would be very much that he would have to learn, in addition to what he already knew.

Starting as an ordinary seaman, he would skip the drudgery of a ship's boy, and his promotion would be somewhat more rapid, though not remarkably so, for on the sea you have to be thoroughly competent in one position before you can rise to a higher.

Of the four officers on an ocean steamship the two senior officers keep the reckoning of the ship by observation, that is, by means of the stars, the moon and the sun. The third and fourth, or two junior officers, keep the dead reckoning. By this is meant the calculation of the ship's position, independently of celestial observations.

The pay of the captain of an ocean steamer will be from two thousand five hundred to three thousand dollars a years. The first officer will receive about nine hundred dollars a year, the second seven hundred and twenty, the third and fourth four hundred and eighty dollars a year. This will be in addition to living expenses on board ship.—*George J. Manson in St. Nicholas.*

One of the men who lets boats on the Pawtuxet says he has some new ones that are bound to suit unmarried couples, for there is only one seat in the boat, and it will be a case of two souls with but a single thwart.

Bismarck is said to be ageing fast. His hair is snow white and his face is marked with deep wrinkles. But a man may live a long time after wrinkles and white hair have set in.

Seals for Letters.

The materials impressed by seals have been nearly as varied as the shapes of the signets impressing them. Gold, silver, and other metals were anciently in use, and even prepared earth or clays. Common wax was, of course, most prevalent before the introduction of sealing-wax, a compound of lac and other materials invented in the sixteenth century. White wax was used by Otho I. of Germany and by many English monarchs. Rufus, however, very appropriately adopted red. Blue is the rarest of tints; green was favored by the emperors and patriarchs of the east. At present vermillion wax is the most common, but should the method of sealing letters be revived we may expect, with the resources of modern chemistry and the diversity of modern tastes, a polychromatic range of hues unknown to former ages.

The first seals consisted of a ring that was affixed to a clay or bole, or later to chalk or creta astatica, a mixture of pitch, wax and plaster. The use of wax did not become general till the middle ages. Bees-wax, rendered yellow by time, was the first material used. Then came sealing-wax mixed with a white substance. Red wax began with Louis VI., in 1113, and green wax made its appearance about the year 1163. In the thirteenth century yellow, brown, rose, black, and blue were added to the foregoing colors. Black wax is a rarety met with in the seals of the military and religious orders.

Goethe, after his return from Italy, almost always sealed his letters with an antique head, such as that of Socrates, Minerva, or Meda. The astronomer Lalande's seal had a ship engraved upon it, and Meyerbeer's had a lyre, with the legend: "Always in Tune." Victor Hugo had a very simple seal. At the sale of his effects Arsene Houssaye brought a seal with the initials V. H., so arranged that when inverted they formed the cipher A. H.

The biggest seal belongs to America, and was presented to President Pierce by some citizens of San Francisco. Upon this was represented a kind of summary of Californian history and a number of devices, such as a grizzly bear and an enraged boa. Without it was engraved the president's name, and in its interior parts were small cases containing specimens of various native ores. The weight of this precious gift was something like a pound.

The early Christian used the sacred devices of the dove, the fish, the anchor, and the lyre, and the monks of Durham, becoming possessed of a seal on which was figured the head of Jupiter Tonans, had engraved beneath it the name of good King Oswald, thus sanctifying it to the uses of the church.

Among the ancients ring seals were used not only for sealing letters, but also, as small locks were not common, for sealing caskets and chests that contained valuable objects; and they were even employed for sealing the doors of houses and apartments.

Shakspere's signet has his initials, "W. S.," and a true-lover's knot—a device which has led to the supposition that it was given to him by Anne Hathaway.

Mary, queen of Scots had a seal with the arms of the three kingdoms upon it, and the use of this formed a count in the indictment against her.

The seals of Sennacherib and Cheops are still extant, together with a multitude of ancient signets both of the east and the west.

In England, before watches were worn, the seal was attached to the wrist, forming, in fact, a pendant to a bracelet.

Modern Torpedo-Boats.

The most noted torpedo-boat builders of the world are Messrs. Yarrow and Messrs. Thornycroft, of London. Each of these great firms employs from 1,000 to 1,200 workmen, and can turn out at least one completed boat per week. The chief peculiarity of torpedo-boats is their almost phenomenal speed. They are built of steel, the different classes ranging in length from 55 feet, intended for harbor defense, to vessels of 166 feet, capable of making an extended cruise at sea. The Falke, a boat recently built by the Messrs. Yarrow for the Austro-Hungarian government, is 135 feet long, 14 feet wide, draught of water 5 feet 6 inches, and attained on the trial trip a speed of 25½ miles per hour. The armament consists of two Nordenfeldt machine-guns, carried on deck and two bow-tubes for discharging Whitehead torpedoes.

The development of torpedo-boats is now so rapidly progressing that any description becomes almost out of date during the writing. A vessel just completed by the Messrs. Yarrow for the Japanese government is the largest that has been yet built. It is 166 feet long, 19 feet wide, is provided with twin screws to give greater facility in turning, and maintains a speed of 24 miles per hour. The engines are protected by a steel deck one inch thick; and, in addition to two bow-tubes for discharging torpedoes directly ahead, two turn-tables are mounted on deck, from which torpedoes can be launched in any desired direction.

Very similar in their construction, and no less famous for speed and maneuvering qualities, are the boats built by the Messrs. Thornycroft.

In this country the Messrs. Herreshoff, of Bristol, R. I., have a number of very fast boats designed to be used with torpedoes. One of these is the noted steam-yacht Stiletto, which may well be taken as a representative of the American type. The Stiletto is built of wood with iron braces; length, 94 feet; width, 11 feet, draught of water, 4 feet 6 inches, and has attained a speed of twenty-five miles per hour.

A very formidable torpedo-vessel has been built in recent years by that greatest of living engineers, Capt. John Ericsson. It has been appropriately named the Destroyer. Once, at a critical moment in the history of our country, as every American well knows, Capt. Ericsson came to the rescue with a monitor. Since then his genius, energies, and mechanical skill have been devoted to the problem of saving our great coast cities from destruction in the event of war with a foreign naval power. The result of these years of study and experimenting is the Destroyer, armed with a torpedo-gun which discharges under the water a projectile carrying a charge sufficient to sink the largest iron-clad afloat. The submarine gun is mounted in the bow of the vessel, near the keel, and is thus nearly ten feet below the surface of the water. It consists of a cylinder of gun-metal, or steel, thirty feet long, additionally strengthened at the breech by broad steel rings. It is loaded at the breech, the muzzle being incased by the vessel's stem, and closed by a valve to exclude the water. This valve is opened by suitable levers just before the gun is discharged, and closes automatically as the projectile leaves the muzzle. The projectile is a steel torpedo, 25 feet long, 16 inches in diameter, and carrying a charge of 300 pounds of gun-cotton. It has a range of 300 feet during the first three seconds of its flight. The form of the torpedo is cylindrical, with a conical point, in which is placed the percussion lock and firing-pin, and the explosion takes place upon impact.—*From "Modern Aggressive Torpedoes," in Scribner's Magazine.*

Capt. Lincoln.

It is not unworthy of notice that in a country where military titles were conferred with ludicrous profusion and borne with absurd complacency, Lincoln, who had actually been commissioned, and served as captain, never used the designation after he laid down his command.—*Lincoln's Life. The Century.*

Emlyn A. Stewardson, son of Thomas Stewardson of Germantown Pa., has just won the high distinction of ranking first at the examination for admission to the School of Sculpture in the Beaux arts at Paris. There were 76 contestants, gathered from almost every civilized country on the earth.